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WHAT WASHINGTON'S HIDING

U.S. Taxpayers Foot Bill For POW Swap

By PAUL HENDRIX

The U. S. government now has its full force behind the efforts to liberate the 1,113 Bay of Pigs invasion prisoners from

Communist Cuba, despite an elaborate "managed news" program to sell the U. S. taxpayers the idea the project is an undertaking by private citizens.

Directing the behind-the-scenes governmental maneuvering in the negotiations and assembly of the 62-million-dollar ransom package of foods and medicine is Attorney General Robert Kennedy.

Exactly how much in government funds is being expended to conclude the prisoner exchange probably never will be determined officially, but responsible sources in Washington report most of the total cost of the project is being borne by the federal government.

Ultimately, the U. S. taxpayers will foot the bill.

Also threads are appearing across the United States indicating the Justice Department and other instruments of the Kennedy Administration are using political pressure in some in-

stances to obtain merchandise for the ransom package.

In New York, business sources have reported that Attorney General Kennedy has personally made requests for some of the food and drugs being readied for shipment to Havana.

The sources said the President's brother described himself as acting as a private citizen rather than an administration official. He reportedly told the sources the operation had the full support of the President but there were legal objections to direct participation by the chief executive.

On the West Coast, Dr. Arnold Beckman, president of the Beckman Instrument Co. of Fullerton, Calif., reported that a Washington attorney called him from the Justice Department and asked for \$60,000 worth of equipment.

Beckman called the exchange "Castro blackmail" and said he was not in keeping with the United States.

Beckman declined to identify the lawyer who called him, but said the attorney told him he represented the Cuban Fam-

ilies Committee and the American Red Cross.

Beckman added that some of the instruments requested have been considered of strategic importance and shouldn't be sent to a Communist country.

Edwin Guthman, public information officer for the Justice Department, has maintained steadfastly in recent weeks that the attorney general had no role in the negotiations and the project was solely the work of the Families Committee.

Today, Guthman acknowledged that the Justice Depart-

ment and the Internal Revenue Service have made staff members available to advise lawyers working with James B. Donovan on tax questions and similar matters.

He admitted that private lawyers working on the exchange had used Justice Department phones, but claimed the Fam-

ilies Committee would pay for the calls.

Last night, the Internal Revenue Service ruled that any person or firm that donates food or medicine in the prisoner exchange may list the value as a charity tax deduction.

Asked in Washington if the government itself was donating money, food or drugs to the project, State Department Press Officer Lincoln White declined comment.

Meanwhile, reports from various parts of the United States disclose that the ransom package assembled under the Justice Department supervision has a far broader range than has been announced previously by government spokesmen, Donovan or the Families Committee.

When Donovan returned to Miami from Havana in mid-October after a week of futile negotiations with Fidel Castro he had this to say at a news conference held at Miami International Airport:

"... My work does not involve one dollar in cash. It involves solely drugs, medicines, medical supplies and

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U. S. government has absolutely no part in these negotiations . . .

It now develops as supplies pour into Opa-locka assembly facilities, that land and food staples in large quantities have been included in the Havana-bound shipment.

A large Minnesota company has agreed to donate \$250,000 worth of food requested for Havana delivery.

Paul Willis was reported to have sent a million dollars worth of flour, vegetable oil, prepared potato products, concentrated high-protein multi-purpose food.

Pillsbury Co. reportedly is sending \$250,000 in staples from its regular line of consumer products.

The Green Giant Co. was said to be committed to sending 53,000 cases of canned corn, reportedly valued at \$135,000.

Paul Willis, president of the National Grocers Manufacturers Association said his group had received commitments for about 9-million dollars worth of non-perishable food from about 20 companies for shipment to Cuba.

At least seven Midwest pharmaceutical firms have reported they are sending almost 25 million dollars worth of drugs and

medicines at wholesale prices to the exchange project.

The firms are Upjohn Co., Parke Davis & Co., G. D. Searle & Co., Abbott Laboratories, Armour Pharmaceuticals Co., Baxter Laboratories, and Eli Lilly & Co.

In connection with the newly announced tax relief offer by the government to the firms, there already are signs Congress will be divided on the question when it convenes next month.

Senate Democratic leader

Mike Mansfield predicted Congress would go along with the proposal. However, Sen. Bourke B. Hickenlooper of Iowa, chairman of the Senate GOP policy committee, opposed the idea, calling it a "direct use of government money for the payment of ransom."